

# The Journal of Liberal Religion

VOL. II

No. 1

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Chronicle

Communications and Book Reviews



*Published Quarterly by*

THE UNITARIAN MINISTERIAL UNION  
THE UNIVERSALIST MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION  
AND  
THE MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
5701 WOODLAWN AVENUE, CHICAGO

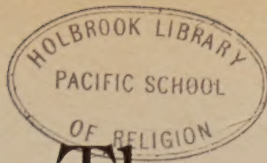
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SUMMER, 1940

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# The Journal of Liberal Religion

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Vol. II

SUMMER, 1940

No. 1

\$1 a year—25c a copy



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*The Editors are pleased to inaugurate in this issue of the JOURNAL the new department of "Communications." We urge our readers to keep this department alive by sending in their comments on articles in the JOURNAL and on matters of general interest to our constituency.*



## Language and Liberal Religion

EDWARD W. OHRENSTEIN

Much criticism, and much defense of Liberal Religion, in recent months, have gone wide of their mark, through failure to meet on the crucial problem of language. In presenting Professor Tillich's essay on "The Religious Symbol" in this issue, *THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION* makes available the prolegomena to the understanding of a philosophical issue which Unitarians and Universalists must face, if they intend to keep abreast of current thought.

Many liberals will question the relevancy of Professor Tillich's subject. In this editorial introduction to the prolegomena, the writer proposes to indicate, not only the particular pertinence of Professor Tillich's language analysis for liberal religion, but also the fact that it cannot be neglected. Ten theses will be stated, which, it is hoped, will elicit spirited discussion by colleagues in the liberal ministry.

1. To a greater extent than any other religious group, liberalism is bound to language. It is an "intellectual" religion, with an emphasis upon "knowing." Our movement began historically, not with an event, but with a tendency to criticize orthodox concepts. Emphasis is still on the mind. In liberal churches, the sermon is the center of the service. Readings and hymns are chosen, not merely for liturgical worth, but also for their ethical or rational message. Many liberal churches have expurgated varying quantities of the traditional music, art, poetry, and ritual. Bells, genuflections, the sign of the cross—the non-verbal symbols—have been eliminated, in favor of the spoken word. "In Words We Trust" for the generation of that power which is religion. Since language has become so important an element in liberal religion, it is imperative that its ministers understand thoroughly the nature and the limitations of that form of human expression.

2. A History of Thought might be written around the concern for the use of words, in successive cultural epochs. The Greek sophists and skeptics revolted against the growing convic-

tion of the philosophers that words can capture reality. In reply, Plato's doctrine of the Idea and Aristotle's logic were a reaffirmation of the trust in words. Thus philosophy oscillates between trust and distrust in language. Man's hunger for certainty regularly drives him to the safety of linguistic dogma, after too long a period of skepticism.<sup>1</sup> Then after the repose in certainty creates a critical situation in human culture, preoccupation with language analysis deepens. The nominalists of the later period of medieval scholasticism, the eighteenth century epistemologists — these revolted against the too great faith in words, current in their day. And contemporary word-skepticism is the product of the evolutionary naturalism of recent decades.<sup>2</sup>

3. Liberal Religion has thriven on the skeptical swing of that word cycle. As long as there were literal hells to destroy, and physical absurdities to despatch, liberalism gained supporters. But life is positive. Current despair and frustration demand a faith stronger than this skepticism. A new reaffirmation of trust in words is on the horizon. The pendulum now swings back, and the older liberalism finds its support waning.

From Arius down to William Ellery Channing, the liberal movement has been largely a criticism of verbal expression. Thus the gentle Channing was moved to proclaim:

Trinitarianism, instead of teaching an intelligible God, offers to the mind a strange compound of hostile attributes, bearing plain marks of those ages of darkness when Christianity shed but a faint ray, and the diseased fancy teemed with prodigies and unnatural creations.<sup>3</sup>

In the belief that intellectual honesty demanded elimination of the "plain marks of those ages of darkness," successive generations of liberals have continued to expurgate the Christian gospel.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the recent speech of Archibald MacLeish before the American Association for Adult Education, berating the lack of purposeful vitality in our generation, as the consequence of our distrust of all words. ". . . unless we regain in this democracy the conviction that there are final things for which democracy will fight, unless we recover a faith in the expression of these things in words, we can leave our planes unbuilt and our battleships on paper, for we shall not need them." (*Congressional Record*, June 11, 1940, p. 12181).

<sup>2</sup>W. M. Urban, *Language and Reality* (New York, 1939), p. 22 et seq. This excellent volume is the most recent and the most helpful full-size study in English of the language problem.

<sup>3</sup>"Unitarian Christianity Most Favorable to Piety," *Works*, one vol. ed. (Boston, 1875), p. 390.



Vivid words like salvation, atonement, and sin, have been replaced by psychologic, sociologic, and philosophic equivalents. Miracles have been banished. The old gospel has been diluted.<sup>4</sup> Liberals have pursued this policy in the belief that by translating Christianity into philosophic terminology, they were creating a new religion, universal, because it speaks a language common to all cultured mankind. The question is, as we shall see later, whether or not these abstract universals answer the same purpose as the homelier, less precise, customary language of Christianity.

4. In its reaction against Roman Catholicism, a large sector of Protestantism lost, somewhere in its history, its sense of the value of the symbolic and the imaginative: the inspiring function of the figurative.<sup>5</sup> Out of exclusive emphasis upon the Word, came the literal interpretation of Holy Scripture. For many centuries, the Bible was read without a sense of historical perspective. Tradition became a statute-book. Protestantism was indirectly influenced by modern science, which insisted upon an exact use of words. Science was interpreted as literal truth. And thus it was believed that unless theology could be interpreted literally, it could not lay claim to truth. In this way arose "cover to cover" belief in the literal truth of the Bible. The results were usually grotesque. Modernism and humanism were the revenge!

Critical movements of recent times, such as rationalism and Unitarianism, have been the ineluctible result of the age of literalism. Their work has been necessary. But just as once the literalists laid claim to sole possession of pure truth, so there is now danger that the rebels of the scientific age may do likewise.

5. What is the significance of this oscillation between sophis-

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A. H. Dakin, *Man the Measure* (Princeton, 1939), chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup>Christianity did not follow the Greek world in treating mythology as mere suggestion, as pure symbol. Cf. E. R. Goodenough, *Religious Tradition and Myth* (New Haven, 1937), p. 81.

That the ancients saw the significance of myth appears from such writers as Sallustius:

" . . . Besides, to wish to teach the whole truth about the Gods to all produces contempt in the foolish, because they cannot understand, and lack of zeal in the good; whereas to conceal the truth by myths prevents the contempt of the foolish and compels the good to practice philosophy . . ."  
—"On the Gods and the World," in Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (New York, 1925), p. 243.

<sup>6</sup>W. M. Urban, "Symbolism as a Theological Principle," *Journal of Religion*, XIX (Jan. 1939), p. 1.

tication and naiveté in the language of religion? Professor Gilbert Murray has a theory of culture which complements Urban's theory of language alternations. Reason, philosophy, and science—the measured use of words—says Professor Murray, thrive in proportion to the peace, security, and stability of a society. In a humanistic world-milieu, self-confident men apply their thinking power to the utmost limit. It is this atmosphere which many liberals have erroneously assumed to be normal. The perspective of history now makes clear the fugitive nature of such times.

The less peace, security, and stability there are in a society, according to Professor Murray, the less reason and philosophy there will be, and the more of their opposites: superstition, crudity, and uncouth approximation. Language accordingly becomes more naive. Certainly security and stability are diminishing today, and we can expect decreasing popular adherence to the "philosophic way of life." "A disintegrating society may produce an age of faith or one of brutal materialism, but it cannot well produce philosophy."

Is there not ample evidence that precisely these two alternatives are being presented to us today? Either Barthian theology or Nazi politics; the faith of the New Theology, or the brutal materialism of fascism?

The relevance of this idea for religious liberalism, and particularly with reference to the subject of language, may be indicated by means of a question. Is it the duty of Liberal Religion to hold the citadel of philosophy and of science, i.e., precise and accurate language, when the rest of the world that has not been converted to barbarism falls back upon fable, myth, and allegory, the language of faith? The body of Western Christendom will turn again to Christian categories and symbols. Are we liberals justified in remaining ideologically aloof from the great stream of Christian life, an isolated cult, living in the rarefied atmosphere of erudition, speaking a sophisticated language? Lester F. Ward has indicated the social problem of such a sophistication:

A wholly emancipated person finds himself almost completely alone in the world. There is not one perhaps in a whole city in which he lives with whom he can converse for five minutes, because the moment anyone begins to talk he reveals the fact that his mind is a bundle of

<sup>1</sup>*Stoic, Christian, and Humanist* (London, 1940), p. 23.



errors, of false conceits, of superstitions, and of prejudices that render him utterly uninteresting. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Since the tide of instability cannot be stemmed, may it not be more useful for us to turn the march of disintegrating society into the channel of faith, from which, after all, reason and philosophy may arise, rather than to allow the triumph of brutal materialism? If religious liberals choose to befriend faith, must they not be able to use the language of faith?

6. Surely there must be some reconciliation between the philosopher and the naive believer. Both use language. The problem is clarified when we recognize that all our speech is not on the same level of discourse. On the ability to make this distinction, rests the possibility of clarification of current theological issues.

Students of language vary in their division of discourse into categories, but all of them agree on the minimum of two vital distinctions. Professor James B. Pratt has pointed out that words are mere arbitrary counters, symbols which society happens to have agreed upon, and that their function is, indirectly and through association, "to rouse in the listener the state of mind which we have or which we wish to set up in him."

Though all symbols are alike in having this one function, they may be divided into two large subclasses on the basis of the type of mind-state which they are used to communicate or induce. To one class would belong those whose function it is to suggest perceptual or exactly definable intellectual objects,—objects with a maximum of logical "objectivity" and a minimum of the subjective and emotional. The other class consists of those symbols which are used to convey or induce emotional or volitional states of mind. Here belong much poetical and musical expression, patriotic hymns, slogans, party emblems, the flag.

Religion, which combines intellectual, emotional, and volitional attitudes, must often seek to communicate exact beliefs by exact expressions; but the peculiarly religious symbols are of the second sort described above. Their aim is to communicate and induce and to stand for various concepts that bear a large emotional connotation, or sometimes to point toward realities which can be felt but never minutely defined. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Professor C. W. Morris of the University of Chicago has divided

<sup>8</sup>*Applied Sociology*, (Boston, 1906), p. 81.

<sup>9</sup>"Sincerity and Symbolism," *Christendom*, I (Spring, 1936), pp. 489-490.

discourse into three types: scientific, aesthetic, and technological.<sup>10</sup> Scientific discourse, the first of Prof. Pratt's types, emphasizes the relations of signs to the objects denoted. It is rich in devices for accurate references to space-time regions, and for elaborate descriptions as to what exists in those regions. Scientific discourse must be empirically confirmable; its single aim is to make possible accurate prediction. It is statemental or predictive in character, and its mode of use is in the apparatus of logic and mathematics.

Aesthetic discourse, on the other hand, gives a vivid portrayal of what men value. The aesthetic sign (word, phrase, or sentence) suggests the value immediately. It is more in the nature of an interjection or an exclamation, than a descriptive adjective. "Our Father, which art in Heaven . . ." is not essentially a statement. It suggests immediate (religious) value. Were one to stop and attempt to verify the "space-time references" in "Our Father, which art . . ." he would lose the meaning of the words. Aesthetic discourse is not a language about values, but rather the language of values. It is not used in attempts to manipulate the world, but rather to appreciate it.<sup>11</sup>

"Religion," says Canon Streeter, . . . "is a kind of half-way house between science and art. Religion, like science, is vitally concerned with truth; it endeavors to express an aspect of Ultimate Reality; but the truth about Reality with which it is concerned, is a truth of quality rather than of quantity. Religion, therefore, must state truth in a way which is likely to evoke a qualitative apprehension of it. . . . The aim of religion is to

<sup>10</sup>"Science, Art, and Technology," *Kenyon Review*, I (Autumn, 1939), p. 409. Also "Science and Discourse," Lecture VIII in a series of Ten Lectures and discussions on *Science: Its History, Philosophy, and Relation to Democracy*, mimeographed by the Graduate School, The Department of Agriculture, Washington, 1939.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Karl Vossler, *The Spirit of Language in Civilization* (London, 1932), chapter VIII. The author distinguishes between linguistic thinking and logical thinking, with the same effect as Pratt and Morris.

Cf. also, A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London, 1936), for the view of the extreme logical positivists, for whom . . . (p. 7) "no statement which refers to a 'reality' transcending the limits of all possible sense-experience can possibly have any literal significance; from which it must follow that the labours of those who have striven to describe such a reality have all been devoted to the production of nonsense. . ." All aesthetic and religious discourse, being indefinable in factual terms, is therefore neither true nor false, but rather harmless nonsense!



make people apprehend something about the quality of the power behind the Universe—Its mystery or awe, Its 'friendliness' or Its beauty—as this quality has been experienced by the great souls of the race."<sup>12</sup> These great souls "must express the visions they have seen, the qualitative apprehension which has been given them, not by the methods used by science, but in forms analogous to those employed by art—the hymn, the dramatic rite, the myth, or the parable. . . ."

7. The *sine qua non*, therefore, for philosophical maturity today, is to understand the non-scientific nature of religious language, and consequently the validity of myth and symbol in their legitimate field.<sup>13</sup> "It is high time," says Berdyaev, "that we stopped identifying myth with invention, with the illusions of primitive mentality, and with anything, in fact, which is essentially opposed to reality. . . . Behind the myth are concealed the greatest realities, the original phenomena of the spiritual life. The creation of myths among peoples denotes a real spiritual life, more real indeed than that of abstract concepts and of rational thought. Myth is always concrete and expresses life better than abstract thought can do. . . ."<sup>14</sup> It is this point which Prof. Tillich's article treats so incisively.

Religion seeks to grasp life in its unity and its wholeness. This can never be expressed in terms of complete rationality, because reason only observes and deduces. This religious grasp of life can be comprehended and described only by transferring the inner unity of the human consciousness, where living unity is directly experienced, to the external world, in the language of myth. Malinowski in his study of myth among savages reports that in the primitive community the myth is not merely a story told,

<sup>12</sup>*Science and Religion* (New York, 1931), p. 101 et seq.

<sup>13</sup>Since this is the crux of the matter, the scientifically-minded naturalistic humanist who may have difficulty in following the brief argument as outlined in this paper, should read further the references in the footnotes, but above all, the following, which give illuminating insight into the place of myth in religion:

Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Truth in Myths," in the volume *The Nature of Religious Experience* (New York, 1937); George Santayana, *Reason in Religion*, vol. 3 of *The Life of Reason* (New York, 1905), chapters I and IV; Nicholas Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (New York, 1935), chapter II.

<sup>14</sup>Berdyaev, *op. cit.* p. 70.

but a reality lived.<sup>15</sup> It is a compelling cosmic drama in which man must be an actor. It is a super-pattern of life into which individual lives fit.

The rationalist contends that the day of the myth is past, now that science has demonstrated its superior accuracy in describing phenomena.<sup>16</sup> But myth answers a human need that cannot be disregarded. We know that often science leaves undescribed—or inadequately or unsatisfactorily described—some phase of human experience. For example, why is there the present moral chaos of the world, with its brutality toward the innocent and its triumph of bestiality? The fate of values, scientific discourse seems unable to describe. The human mind insists on synthesizing these extra-scientific experiences by means of systems of symbolic interpretation. We cannot reject these creative constructs of the mind as nonsense, for value uses a type of discourse other than the scientific. It is incumbent upon us to strive to understand this discourse, rather than to refuse to consider its validity. To this end, close study of Prof. Tillich's ensuing article will be valuable.

8. Nurtured in a culture dominated by science, most religious liberals become scientific monists. For, as Santayana has pointed out,<sup>17</sup> our scientific age has conceitedly looked upon reality as grasped only by *its* method, i.e., learning how things work and may be controlled, to the exclusion of such other methods as the appreciative and the aesthetic. Many of us ignore the writings of modern theologians, because they do not speak our literal scientific language. We declare their ideas unintelligible and assume a superior attitude toward them. If, however, such terms as God the Father and Divine Grace do describe a realm of human experience, we are not justified in spurning them, even though they be in a tongue different from our own. The scientifically-minded

<sup>15</sup>*Myth in Primitive Psychology* (New York, 1926), p. 18. Several anthropological interpretations of this subject vary slightly from the theologian's, but on the whole they are corroborative. See, for example, W. H. R. Rivers, "The Sociological Significance of Myth," *Folk Lore*, XXIII (1912), p. 307. Also, the article "Myth," by Ruth Benedict in *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

<sup>16</sup>George F. Thomas, "Myth and Symbol in Religion," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, VII (1939), p. 163.

<sup>17</sup>"Literal and Symbolic Knowledge," in *Obiter Scripta* (New York, 1936), p. 108.



liberal must acquire the understanding of a new language, if only for the practical purpose of communication.

9. The naturalistic and humanistic trend away from Christology and toward a more generalized religious terminology, asserts its justification on the ground that such "purification" of language is more efficacious. It is time that we seek honest empirical verification of that proposition. Such a study by some graduate student in our theological schools, should prove illuminating. In the actual, effective functioning of a liberal church, is the ingenuous language of the Christian myth inferior to the precise language of philosophic analysis?

The writer has had four years' experience as minister of a thoroughly humanistic religious society, which makes him doubtful of the answer. The scientific minds of our congregation could find no space-time referent for the word God, and so for the traditional prayer, we have substituted an "aspiration," on grounds of accuracy. By the same test, other portions of our religious worship underwent modification, in order that it might pass scientific scrutiny. But as an American clergyman has said, "We have disinfected religion from superstition, only to discover that man cannot live on disinfectants." There is substance in the claim of Sallustius that such language-erudition creates "lack of zeal in the good." Our humanistic religious society shows evidence in substantiation. Mere accuracy does not seem to inspire. Absence of conviction seems to be the price paid for scientific purity. There is a profound truth of educational psychology in Jesus' observation, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe" (John 4:48).

In brief, we need empirical evidence—not just armchair rationale—that religion expressed in abstractions actually is of a superior order, that it contributes to a more complete life, and a truer vision of it, than does the mythical-poetic-symbolic traditional view.

10. The liberal in religion must come to terms with the vitality of tradition through the realization that the language of scientific precision and the language of religion each serve a different purpose. "Religion," says James McBride Dabbs, "is man's largest language."<sup>18</sup> Modesty should compel the scientifically-minded to recognize the different purpose which religious

<sup>18</sup>"Religion Without Poetry," *Southern Review*, II (1936), p. 41.

discourse serves.<sup>19</sup> And in addition they should remember, as Professor Tillich points out, that even scientific language is symbolic. Nor is religious discourse impotent to express the objective reality of its legitimate field.

In discussing the attempts to "modernize" God linguistically, Rosalind Murray aptly points out:

An indeterminate "force for good," an "emanation of our higher selves," the "great mathematical mind," the "movement of integration," "metabology," to use but a few of the synonyms which are supposed to clarify and improve our idea of God, cannot inspire us with a real devotion. It is possible to imagine acceptance of these concepts in so far as the words make any sense at all, but it is utterly impossible for such acceptance to play an active part in human life. . . .<sup>20</sup>

The limited utility of technical philosophy in the body of religious teaching, is indicated in the following:

Rational theology can help us to detect personal errors and illusions, but if we mistake it for a demonstration of real existences it lapses into mere grammatical and etymological deduction which does not convince anybody who is not convinced already. The professional sees so clearly the reality behind his own technical language and operations that he sometimes forgets that the perception of that reality does not come through the verbal technique, but is prior to it. We have invented words like "immanent" *because* we have some knowledge of God, but it is not true that everybody knows these words, nor does anybody arrive at a belief in God through manipulation of these words. . . .<sup>21</sup>

The critically-minded religious liberal should not cease to deplore the error of theological and biblical literalism. But he should also acknowledge that the poetic discourse of religion expresses its truth with a power and a delicacy that is often entirely lost in scientific prose. If like the ancient Greeks we can use myth and symbol as *indicating* but not circumscribing our religious beliefs, we can, as the scientists are doing in the realm of that which can be manipulated, clarify our experiences to ourselves, and then convey them to each other in an effective and vivid medium. Conscious of the human necessity for mythical expression, we can pick up the trail of continuity, after our period of word-skepticism, rejoin the caravan of Christianity, and be again at the same time religious and critically intelligent.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Cf. for example, A. G. Ramsperger, "What is Scientific Knowledge?" *Philosophy of Science*, VI (1939), p. 390, in which the author discreetly limits the field of science: "Scientific method consists in a technique for the precise determination of the way in which variations in one or more objects determine variations in others. . . ."

<sup>20</sup>*The Good Pagan's Failure* (London, 1939), p. 101.

<sup>21</sup>Michael Roberts, "The Moral Influence of Poetry," *Theology*, XXXVIII (1939), p. 18. See also, W. J. Blyton, "Hymns—as Religion and Poetry," *Hibbert Journal*, XXXVI (1938), p. 256. "Noble hyperbole" is this writer's description of symbols such as Cowper's "There Is a Fountain Filled With Blood."

<sup>22</sup>Goodenough, *op. cit.*, p. 88 et seq.



# The Religious Symbol<sup>1</sup>

PAUL TILlich

## I. *The Symbol*

The religious symbol combines the general characteristics of the symbol with the peculiar characteristics it possesses as a religious symbol.

The first and basic characteristic of the symbol is its figurative quality. This implies that the inner attitude which is oriented to the symbol does not have the symbol itself in view but rather that which is symbolized in it. Moreover, that which is symbolized can itself in turn be a symbol for something of a higher rank. Hence, the written character can be called a symbol for the word and the word a symbol for its meaning. Devotion to the crucifix is really directed to the crucifixion on Golgotha and devotion to the latter is in reality intended for the redemptive action of God, which is itself a symbolic expression for an experience of the unconditioned transcendent.

The second characteristic of the symbol is its perceptibility. This implies that something which is intrinsically invisible, ideal, or transcendent is made perceptible in the symbol and is in this way given objectivity. The perceptibility of the symbol need not be sensuous. It can just as well be something imaginatively conceived, as in the example already given of the crucifixion or as in poetic figures. Even abstract concepts can become symbols if their use involves a perceptible element. Thus perhaps the concept of "surplus value" as a symbol of economic exploitation in the consciousness of the proletariat or the idea of the "Supreme Being" as a symbol of the unconditioned transcendent in the consciousness of the religious community may serve as examples.

The third characteristic of the symbol is its innate power. This implies that the symbol has a power inherent within it that dis-

<sup>1</sup>Translated by James Luther Adams, with the assistance of Ernst Fraenkel. This essay, appearing now for the first time in English, has been slightly revised by the author. In its original form it appeared first in *Blätter fuer deutsche Philosophie*, (Bd. 1, H. 4, 1928), and then later it was included as a chapter in the volume, *Religiose Verwirklichung* (Berlin, 1930).

tinguishes it from the mere sign which is impotent in itself.<sup>2</sup> This characteristic is decisive for the distinction between a sign and a symbol. The sign is interchangeable at will. It does not arise from necessity, for it has no inner power. The symbol, however, does possess a necessary character. It cannot be exchanged. It can only disappear when, through dissolution, it loses its inner power. Nor can it be merely constructed; it can only be created. Words and signs originally had a symbolic character. They conveyed the meaning which they expressed, with an inherent power of their own. In the course of evolution and as a result of the transition from the mystical to the empirical, technical view of the world, they have lost their symbolic character, though not entirely. Once having lost their innate power they became signs. The pictorial symbols of religious art were originally charged with a magical power, with the loss of which they became a conventional sign-language and almost forfeited their genuine symbolic character.

The fourth characteristic of the symbol is its acceptability as such. This implies that the symbol is socially rooted and socially supported. Hence it is not correct to say that a thing is first a symbol and then gains acceptance; the process of becoming a symbol and the acceptance of it as a symbol belong together. The act by which a symbol is created is a social act, even though it first springs forth in an individual. The individual can devise signs for his own private needs; he cannot make symbols. If something becomes a symbol for him, it is always so in relation to the community which in turn can recognize itself in it. This fact is clearly evident in confessional symbols which at first are merely the signs by means of which the members of the group recognize each other. "Symbolics" is the science of the distinctive marks of the confessions, that is, the science of confessions. But all other symbols could also be considered in this light. Thus universal "symbolics" is conceivable as a general science of the confessions of all groups, tendencies, and communities.

These general characteristics of the symbol hold for the religious symbol also, as the various examples show. Religious

<sup>2</sup>This characteristic is the most important one. It gives to the symbol the reality which it has almost lost in ordinary usage, as the phrase "only a symbol" shows, and on account of which, for example, the *Berneuchner Buch* (1926) has been criticized.



symbols are distinguished from others by the fact that they are a representation of that which is unconditionally beyond the conceptual sphere, they point to the ultimate reality implied in the religious act, the unconditioned transcendent. All other symbols either stand for something that has also an unsymbolic objective existence aside from its ideal significance, as, for example, in Germany the flag represents the army, and the army in turn represents the state; or they are the forms giving expression to an invisible thing that has no existence except in its symbols, as for example, cultural creations like works of art, scientific concepts, and legal forms. It is only in symbolic fashion that such intangible things as these can be given expression at all.

The whole situation is essentially different with religious symbols. The latter must express an object that by its very nature transcends everything in the empirical order, hence an object that cannot acquire an objective character by means of a spiritual act.<sup>3</sup> Religious symbols have no basis either in the empirical order or in the cultural order of meaning. Strictly speaking, they have no basis at all. In the language of religion, they are an object of faith. They make no other claim than that they represent the intangible transcendent, which, moreover, has no need of them in order to come into existence. Upon this fact depends a peculiar characteristic of religious symbols, namely, that they have two levels. On the basic level they are representations of the unconditioned transcendent and of our relations to it, and on the other levels they are illustrations of the symbols belonging to that first level. At this point we shall turn aside to make certain necessary inquiries and then later come back to this aspect of the subject.

## 2. *Theories of the religious symbol.*

The theories of the religious symbol are valid also in many respects for the symbol in general. In the consideration of these theories, however, we shall always come to a point where the independent and specific problems of the religious symbol will arise and require a solution. The theories of the symbol can be classi-

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<sup>3</sup>The religious act can never be interpreted as the creator of a specific world of objects. Of its very essence it cannot be so: it struggles unconditionally against being relegated to a position wholly within the confines of the intellectual process by which meaning is given to the world. Hence, no access to the religious symbol is possible for critical idealism.

fied into negative and positive theories. The negative theories are those that interpret the symbol as reflecting an aspect of reality that is not consciously intended in the symbol. They deny that the symbol has an objective reference and attribute to it merely a subjective character. A definite subjective state and not the actual facts referred to in the symbol is expressed in the symbol. These theories are especially dangerous for religious symbols, since the latter do not refer to a world of objects, yet they intend to express a reality and not merely the subjective character of a religious individual.

On scientific and systematic grounds these theories are always ultimately reducible to two types: the psychological and the sociological theory of the symbol. Both types have acquired historical significance because they have effectively, though one-sidedly, recognized one aspect of the development of symbols: they have shown that the psychological and social situation is decisive for the selection of symbols in all spheres. Going beyond this, they attempt also to show that symbols have no other reality than to serve as an expression of the psychological and social situation; that is, these negative theories set forth a genetic theory of the symbol itself. The two prophetic personalities of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche and Marx, gave the decisive impulse to this tendency.<sup>4</sup> This fact indicates that these theories are devised for combat and that they aim to do away with something, to destroy a symbol-complex. The object of their attack is the symbolism of bourgeois society including that of the churches supported by bourgeois society. The means employed in their attack is the argument that these symbols are an expression of a definite will to power and have no other reality than that which is conferred upon them by this will to power.

Marx used the expression "ideology" to describe this function of symbols and he made it into an unprecedentedly powerful political symbol. Symbols are ideologies. The intellectual content, that is, the objective reference of symbols, or that which is expressed in them, is a political subterfuge that is consciously or unconsciously created for the sake of dominance in power. This thesis has not, to be sure, been followed up by a tested application

<sup>4</sup>Cf. my book *The Religious Situation*, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1932), for an estimate of Nietzsche and Marx.

in the various fields of symbolism. Wherever this has been attempted (and it was not done in the writings of Marx), the result has been a complete failure. Indeed, qualifications that destroy the meaning of this theory can be found in the earliest as well as in the most recent literature of Marxism.<sup>5</sup>

Wherever there has been a discussion of the inherent character of symbols and of their effect upon the social situation, the more rigid theory has been relinquished and the objective reference of symbols has been recognized. This retreat is, however, unavoidable, for a consistent carrying through of the theory would brand the theory along with its political symbolical power as itself an ideology that could only make the claim to be an expression of the proletarian social situation, but by no means an expression of real relationships. Thus the symbol "ideology" would itself be an ideology. It would also remain inconceivable how the will to power could make use of different kinds of symbols, if a cogent relevance to the facts were not inherent in the symbols.<sup>6</sup>

The theory of symbols deriving from Nietzsche has in our day received substantial support from the psychology of the unconscious (depth psychology). The Freudian analysis of the unconscious in a similar way interprets cultural and religious symbols as arising out of unconscious processes. The obscure and mysterious realm of dreams is held to be a symbol area of the first order. When we examine the unconscious, we see the no less mysterious symbols of mythology in a clearer light. All symbols are interpreted as sublimations of vital and instinctive impulses which have been repressed. This interpretation has been employed with greatest success in connection with those symbols that are lacking in any objective foundations, like the dream and the myth. In this way they are deprived of their objective reference. ✂

But this theory has not been carried out consistently either. In the concept of sublimation the problem is concealed rather than solved; for this conception implies not only a pointing up or re-

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<sup>5</sup>This is already true in the case of Engels and in many ways in contemporary literature. Marx himself apparently did not think of working out a general symbol theory for cultural creations. For him the idea was only an aspect of the concrete struggle of the proletariat.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. the general epistemological treatment of the concept of ideology in Karl Mannheim's book, *Ideology and Utopia*, and my review of this book in the October 1929 number of *Gesellschaft*.



fining of the instinctive impulses but also a turning of the impulses towards areas of reality that, so far as their content is concerned, have nothing to do with impulses. Therefore an earnest attempt at carrying out the theory has never been made so far as it concerns the symbols that have objective reference. This holds especially for the science of psychoanalysis whose own inherent character is all too clearly the basis that supports the whole theory. Before it one always comes to a halt—and just for the same reason as obtains for the theory of ideology. All the more insistently, however, the question is raised by the psychology of the unconscious, concerning those symbols that have no objective empirical basis.

When psychoanalysis, for example, interprets the use of the father symbol in reference to God, as an expression of the analytical father-complex (just as sociology on its part interprets it as an indication of the dominance of the male), we must raise the question as to how far the significance of this explanation extends. Obviously no further than its next assertion: that the *selection* of this symbol is to be explained by the father-complex. But the interpretation that in general the setting up of religious symbols is determined by complexes, is not valid. In other words, a theory of the religious symbol is not given but rather a theory as to how religious symbols are selected. Nor is anything more than this possible; for the positing of an unconditioned transcendent can by no means be explained on the basis of the conditioned and immanent impulses of the unconscious.<sup>7</sup> But the final thing has not

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<sup>7</sup>Even this, however, has been attempted. Jung in his analysis of Meister Eckhart has explained the latter's idea of God on the basis of the infinity of the repressed desires of the libido. But the use of the category of the infinite cannot be derived from the immediacy of the vital urges. The finite is always presupposed, and the libido, however strong it may be, is itself a finite. The category of the infinite requires on principle something that is beyond everything given. But in the idea of the Unconditioned there is implied not only an Unconditioned which transcends everything given but also an unconditioned demand upon everything given. Although actual formative processes may be explained psychoanalytically to a certain extent (e.g., the "demand" that arises from the authority of the father), yet the quality of unconditionedness, which under certain circumstances even the demand of a real father can acquire, is never to be derived in this way. The leap into the Unconditioned is at the same time a leap out of the "analytical" sphere, and there is no analyst who has not made this leap at some point or other, for example, when he is convinced of the validity of the findings of his own researches.

yet been said on the question of the selection of religious symbols; the possibility has not been taken into account that the vital impulses which induce the selection of the father symbol are themselves the operation of a primordial shaping of life, and therefore the intuition of the Unconditioned in this symbol expresses a truth which, though limited, is yet an ultimate, and therefore a religious, truth. The same thing would hold also for the sociological theory of the selection of symbols. Psychological and social impulses control the selection; but they can themselves be viewed as symbols for an ultimate metaphysical structure of existence. — This consideration deprives these theories of their negative implications even when they are correct, namely, in their explanation of the *selection* of symbols.<sup>8</sup>

With the consideration of the cultural-morphological interpretation of symbols we make a transition from the negative to the positive theory.<sup>9</sup> In common with the negative theories, it makes the selection of symbols dependent upon a subjective factor, the soul of the culture. But this factor is not, as it is asserted to be by the negative theories, unrelated to the objective reference of the symbols, but rather has an essential relation to it. Indeed, it is by means of this relationship that the subjective factor is defined as "the soul of the culture." The vital and the cultural are not separate from each other, but rather they constitute a unity within the creative, formative principle of a culture. All cultural creations are symbols for a definite, psychic, formative principle. This symbolic character does not, however, negate its objectivity.

The central phenomenon of the cultural-morphological theory is "style." In the style of works of art, concepts, legal forms, and the like, the soul of the culture from which they derive, finds expression. By means of this conception of style all aspects or forms

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<sup>8</sup>The strength of the negative theories of symbol selection depends upon two factors, a positive and a negative. The positive is the assertion of the fateful character of the spiritual life, individual as well as social, and thus the rejection of the abstract-superhistorical concept of the mind. The negative is the denial of all serious ontological discussions; we have here, therefore, a naive capitulation to a wholly inadequate, and at best superficial, conception of existence. The naive ontological use of the terms "society" or the "unconscious" or "life" is no less dangerous than the generally very much more cautious use of the categories of idealistic ontology.

<sup>9</sup>Advocated chiefly by Spengler. His idea of the stylistic unity of cultures and epochs has entered almost as a dogma into the general scientific and philosophical consciousness.

of cultural life become symbols.<sup>10</sup> The morphologist of culture is concerned with style and not with the precise details of the development of a culture. Thus he will incur the strictures we have associated with the negative theory. Indeed, he must do so, if he looks upon morphology as an absolute-principle, that is, if he denies all objective connection between the creations of the different cultural epochs. In this theory he exposes himself to the danger that his theory will itself be interpreted only as a symbol for a psychological-cultural situation. At least when dealing with his own science he too must come to a halt.

The symbols that are most of all threatened by this theory are those symbols that possess no objective references and can be interpreted as immediate forms of expression of the soul of the culture and as such can be interpreted as detached from every realm of fact. Against this threat we must assert: the fact that the soul must express itself religiously when it expresses itself immediately, cannot be explained in any other way than by the fact that the soul is religious, that the relation to the unconditioned transcendent is essential or constitutive for it. The fact that religious symbols are distinguished from all others in power of expression and immediacy, can be explained only by the fact that that which pertains to the soul, and this holds also for the soul of a culture, must be defined precisely by the relation to the unconditioned transcendent. When this "soul"—apart from all objective, empirical relations—expresses itself, it does so religiously. It is in this context that the connection between the vital and the cultural elements in the "soul" can be understood, namely, from the fact that each element, in transcending itself, meets the other at the point of transcendence: the vital element, by breaking through its own immediacy (for which perhaps the instinct for death, as maintained by Freud, is an expression, although it is absolutely incomprehensible on the basis of the vital); the cultural element, in so far as none of its forms can be exempt from the crisis that they encounter as a result of the demands of the objective world as well as of the meaning of life itself. This

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<sup>10</sup>Thus we can speak of a "style of thought" and conceive of the history of philosophy as a history partly of a typical, partly of a changing, style of thought. This can lead to important insights if it is carried out with due attention to the singularity of historical events and to the claim to validity asserted by every philosophical idea.



fact explains how a "style" of culture possesses a symbolic power that has religious significance. In so far as the psychic element or the "soul" is expressed in the style, the relation to the unconditioned transcendent is expressed in it. The sphere of religion in so far as it is expressed in symbols embraces the whole autonomous culture.<sup>11</sup> Thus a science of the symbolics of culture worked out from the religious point of view, becomes a necessary task. Naturally this consideration has to do with only one side of culture. The various independent spheres of things remain intact; the symbolic character of cultural creation is "broken" by its objective, empirical character. The symbolism of style is a "broken," indirectly religious symbolism. But it is for this very reason that it has a fundamental significance for the understanding of the religious symbol in general.

We have presupposed the difference between the symbolic and the objective character of cultural creations. This conception, however, is opposed by the critical-idealistic theory of the symbol. The latter identifies the symbolic and the objective character and thereby gives to the concept of the symbol a new form and a tremendous extension. As a result of the work of Cassirer, this conception today stands in the foreground of symbol theory. We shall combine the exposition and criticism of this theory with an exposition and criticism of Cassirer's theory of mythical symbols.

The myth is viewed as a definite form of the cultural interpretation of existence and thus, in accordance with idealistic presuppositions, it is viewed as an objective creation. A symbolic reality is attributed to the laws according to which myths are formed. The myth is classified along with the other cultural spheres that are also manifested in symbols, such as language, philosophy, art, etc. The subject-matter of myth is therefore not to be considered as in any special way symbolic. It has a symbolic element in common with all cultural creations; for a cultural life exists only in symbols. To be sure, a pre-cultural and pre-symbolic world of intuition does exist, but not a reality transcendent to symbols. Cultural reality is in its essence symbolic reality; not because in itself it reflects a reality but rather because, being free from the

<sup>11</sup>This is the basic thesis of my *Philosophy of Religion*; cf. my address "Ueber die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur," *Vortraege der Kantstudien*, 2nd ed. 1921, and my *Religionsphilosophie* in Dessoir's *Lehrbuch der Philosophie*, 1925.

relation to any thing-in-itself beyond the empirical, it creates a world of cultural objects. At this point we shall turn aside from the epistemological problem and raise the question as to how mythical and religious symbolism are related to each other. The answer given by critical idealism is that originally mythical and religious symbolism are interfused. But gradually religious symbolism rises above mythical symbolism, struggles against it and overcomes it.—This answer grasps the problem and formulates it. But it does not contain the solution: if mythology is in its essence a cultural creation like science, art, law, it is difficult to understand why it should be destroyed, indeed it is impossible that it should decline, for it has its own proper and necessary place in the meaningful structure of cultural life. If religion, on the other hand, is an autonomous area of meaning, we must ask how it is possible that it was originally embedded in myth. In short, the evolutionary and the transcendental conceptions of the myth contradict each other.

This tension is resolved as soon as it is pointed out that the myth, far from having disappeared, has only altered its form. Thus the conflict between religion and myth would not be a conflict with myth as such but rather of one particular myth with another. And this is what appears to me to be the case. The struggle of the Jewish prophets against pagan mythology was a struggle of the ethical henotheism of the old religion of the desert against the ecstatic polytheism of agrarian religion, a struggle of Jahwe against Baalism. But the mythical element is just as active in the religion of Jahwe as in the religion of Baal. To be sure, something has happened to bring in question the myth in its immediacy: the Jahwe myth is a historical myth, that is, it is related to the empirical realities of history. It has the realism of the historical. Yet transcendence has in a radical fashion insinuated itself into the mythical figure of Jahwe. Jahwe acquires the unconditionedness which is intended in the religious act. But the myth is not thereby removed. Empirical history remains always related to a super-empirical, a transcendent history, which extends from the primitive period of innocence on beyond Jahwe's choice of his people to the end of history. Unconditioned transcendence as such is not perceptible. If it is to be perceived—and it must be so in religion—it can be done only in mythical conceptions. Of course these mythical ideas thereby lose their immediate meaning, they

point beyond themselves, just as, conversely, history, when interpreted mythically, always remains real history demanding actual decisions.—Nor does mysticism eliminate the myth, though it has broken the immediately mythical consciousness, for example, in India. The highest concept of even an abstractly transcendent mysticism has necessarily a mythical element still within it. The lower forms of the myth are not negated but are rather deprived of their ultimate reality just as all real facts are deprived of their actuality. The mythical consciousness can therefore be either broken or unbroken; in any case, it does not disappear. If one decides to characterize only the unbroken mythical mentality as mythical, then of course the myth is overcome in religion and it is shown to be non-essential. If, on the other hand, one calls every intuition of transcendence mythical, then there is no such thing as an un-mythical attitude and the myth is shown to be essential. The usage is unsettled, presumably not because of the lack of scientific clarification but because of the inner dialectic that characterizes the concept of myth.

The objects of mythical intuition are at the same time the objects of scientific and philosophical investigation. With the appearance of science they enter as such into a new dialectic. There begins a transformation of the objects of mythical intuition into objects of mere empirical experience. A separate objective world arises and confronts the rational, perceiving subject. As a result, the subjective factor which is adapted to all immediately mythical data, the inner living connection of the consciousness with everything existing and with the inwardness of everything real, disappears or is repressed. In so far as science thus builds up its own world of objects, it repels the myth. But, for the purpose of constructing this world of "things," science needs concepts that are transcendent to reality. In this way science comes into a new mythical situation and itself becomes myth-creative; thus concepts like evolution, will to power, life, etc., have a mythical character. They no longer serve only for the construction of the empirical order, but rather indicate the transcendent presuppositions of this order. But since the element of the Unconditioned is firmly implanted in each of these presuppositions, and since the presupposition of all thinking (which is below the "abyss of being"), signifies both the limits and the abyss of objectification, there comes into science an element of the religious, mythical mentality. Hence, it is possible for the ultimate presuppositions of science to be classed with the



highest concepts of abstract mysticism or of abstract monotheism. In this way there arises an abstract myth that is no less a myth than a concrete one, even if it is broken in its immediacy. Indeed, the living meaning of creative metaphysics is that it involves just such an abstract myth. And from this fact it derives both its doubtful character as a science and its religious power. //

Under these circumstances one must reject the classification of mythology as an independent type of symbol-creation different from science and religion. In both science and religion mythology is an element that cannot be eliminated, even though it may be broken. Plato recognizes this when on the one hand he puts science in opposition to myth and on the other must acknowledge the indispensability of myth to science. All metaphysics reaches a point where its concepts are myths not only in fact but even in the sound of its words.<sup>12</sup> The myth is, therefore, an essential element of everything in the intellectual and cultural sphere. Nevertheless it is necessary to distinguish between the unbroken and the broken form of the myth. In the unbroken myth three elements are linked together: the religious, the scientific, and the truly mythical elements: the religious element as relatedness to the unconditioned transcendent, the scientific as relatedness to objective reality, the truly mythical as an objectification of the transcendent through the medium of intuitions and conceptions of reality. This unity was possible only so long as the unconditionedness of the religious transcendent and the rationality of the world of things were hidden from consciousness. Thus the creations of the mythical consciousness could appear as satisfying both the religious and the scientific claim (of course, the contrast between religion and science as such was not evident at that time). This situation could not continue indefinitely. The breaking down of this unity signifies a transition into an autonomous religion and into an autonomous science, and thus it signifies the breaking down of the original mythical mentality. At the same time, however, the mythical stands forth in

<sup>12</sup>Heidegger's ontology, the greatness of which depends on the fact that it undertakes to create a rational myth of being, indicates how correct this conception of metaphysics is. Such a judgment is naturally permitted only if it is clear that the creation of metaphysics is alone possible in subjection to the laws of ontological knowledge. Where this is lacking, as it is with innumerable fantastic "*Weltanschauung* metaphysicians," the resulting concepts are neither rationally justified nor imbued with mythical power. In all genuine metaphysics rational and mythical power are correlative.

its purity and in its true character, as a necessary element in the construction of a meaningful reality. Thus it becomes clear that the myth is the central concept of those symbols in which the unconditioned transcendent is envisaged either mediately or immediately.

On this basis not only the original connection of the myth with religion and with a general awareness and understanding of the world becomes intelligible, but also the fact that the myth by its very nature must always strive to achieve again this original unity. Wherever the objective world is recognized in its relatedness to the unconditioned transcendent, and wherever the unconditioned transcendent is interpreted from the point of view of the objective world, the unity of religion with the desire to understand the world is restored in the mythical symbol. Thus science becomes a myth despite its rational autonomy, and religion absorbs certain aspects of the understanding and knowledge of the world, despite its own transcendent autonomy, in order in these ways to sense the transcendent. In our time, however, this development is more a tendency than a reality. Its success would involve a thoroughgoing transformation of both the scientific and the religious mentality.<sup>13</sup>

It must not be supposed that mythical symbols constitute one sphere of symbols beside other spheres. For, in contrast to the others, they are "unfounded" symbols, that is, they are determined essentially by their symbolic character.—If it is presupposed in accordance with critical idealism that cultural creations do not give expression to a thing-in-itself, but rather that reality is the cultural and objective sphere constituted by these creations, then it is quite clear that the world of mythical objects has an imaginary and figurative character entirely different from that of the world of artistic objects. The work of art expresses wholly intrinsically the reality that it aims to express. The work of art as a figurative thing does not point beyond itself to a reality of a different order. When it tries to do so, as in symbolic art, a special intention is present, the peculiarity of which shows that art as such does not create symbols but rather a meaningful reality of its own. In so far as it has a symbolic character, it acquires a mythical character

<sup>13</sup>All the talk about the "new myth" is an indication of how remote the new myth is in actuality. A myth that is sought for as myth is for that very reason repelled. Only when one's thinking has objective reference can a truly mythical element pulsate through it.

also. It surrenders its own character as pure art in order to express a transcendent meaning.—The same thing is true for science. The attempt to present a historical figure as a symbol raises this figure to the mythical level and gives to the empirically historical a certain figurative character in favor of its transcendent meaning. The fact that the view here alluded to is advocated only by a small group of historians (the school of the great poet, Stefan George) again indicates that science, although it does create its own peculiar structures of meaning, does not create symbols. (The secondary level of linguistic and written sign-symbols does not come into consideration for our question.) If, nevertheless, the meaning structures of art and science are called symbols, no other objection can be made to this usage than that one must search for a new word for symbol in the narrower sense.—The category of the mythical, therefore, includes essentially that of the symbolic, and that in distinction from the other areas of meaning which include the symbolic exactly to the degree that they are subservient to the mythical. That this connection is never completely absent has been shown by the discussion of the symbolic character of "style."

The fact that mythical symbols are from the objective, empirical point of view without a basis—even when cultural creations are involved—and the fact that they are for this reason symbols in the genuine sense, indicates the inadequacy of critical idealism. In its place we propose a transcendent realism. The thing referred to in the mythical symbol is the unconditioned transcendent, the source of both existence and meaning, which transcends being-in-itself as well as being-for-us. On the basis of this presupposition, which cannot be further dealt with here, the ensuing discussion of the religious symbol will proceed.

### 3. *Types of religious symbol*

We distinguish two levels of religious symbols, a supporting level in which religious objectivity is established and which is based in itself; and a level supported by it and pointing to objects of the other level. Accordingly we call the symbols of the first level the "objective religious symbols" and those of the second level, the "self-transcending religious symbols." The objective religious symbols will occupy the central place in our discussion. Indeed, all the previous discussion has been concerned with them. They are themselves to be subdivided into several groups.

The first and basic level of objective religious symbolism is the



world of divine beings which, after the "breaking" of the myth, is "the Supreme Being," God. The divine beings and the Supreme Being, God, are representations of that which is ultimately referred to in the religious act. They are representations, for the unconditioned transcendent surpasses every possible conception of a being, including even the conception of a Supreme Being. In so far as any such being is assumed as existent, it is again annihilated in the religious act. In this annihilation, in this atheism immanent in the religious act, the profoundest aspect of the religious act is manifest. Wherever this aspect is lost sight of, there results an objectification of the Unconditioned (which is in essence opposed to objectification), a result which is destructive of the religious as well as of the cultural life. Thus God is made into a "thing" that is not a real thing but a contradiction in terms and an absurdity; demanding belief in such a thing is demanding a religious "work," a sacrifice, an act of asceticism and the self-destruction of the human mind. It is the religious function of atheism ever to remind us that the religious act has to do with the unconditioned transcendent, and that the representations of the Unconditioned are not objects concerning whose existence or non-existence a discussion would be possible.<sup>14</sup>

This oscillation between the setting up and the destruction of the religious object expresses itself immediately in the living idea of God. It is indeed true that the religious act really signifies what it refers to: it signifies God. But the word "God" involves a double meaning: it connotes the unconditioned transcendent, the ultimate, and also an object somehow endowed with qualities and actions. The first is not figurative or symbolic, but is rather in the strictest sense what it is said to be. The second, however, is really symbolic, figurative. It is the second that is the object envisaged by the religious consciousness. The idea of a Supreme Being possessing certain definite qualities is present in the consciousness. But the religious consciousness is also aware of the fact that when the word "God" is heard, this idea is figurative, that it does not signify an object, that is, it must be transcendent. The word "God"

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<sup>14</sup>This idea, which I have set forth in my *Philosophy of Religion*, has, in connection with the review of the book in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, lead to a discussion between Hirsch and Traub concerning my "atheism", which has been made capital of even in church politics. This fact only indicates to me how strange dialectical thinking is to Protestant theology in a time when "dialectical theology" stands in the focus of all theological discussion.

produces a contradiction in the consciousness, it involves something figurative that is present in the consciousness and something not figurative that we really have in mind and that is represented by this idea. In the word "God" is contained at the same time that which actually functions as a representation and also the idea that it is *only* a representation. It has the peculiarity of transcending its own conceptual content: upon this depends the numinous character that the word has in science and in life in spite of every misuse through false objectification. God as an object is a representation of the reality ultimately referred to in the religious act, but in the word "God" this objectivity is negated and at the same time its representative character is asserted.

The second group of objective religious symbols has to do with characterizations of the nature and actions of God. Here God is presupposed as an object. And yet these characterizations have an element in them that indicates the figurative character of that presupposition. Religiously and theologically, this fact is expressed in the awareness that all knowledge of God has a symbolic character. The question concerning the reality and the real differentiation of the attributes of God likewise indicates that we are concerned with symbols here. But this by no means signifies that these statements are lacking in truth or that these symbols are interchangeable at will. Genuine symbols are not interchangeable at all, and real symbols provide no objective knowledge, but yet a true awareness. Therefore, the religious consciousness does not doubt the possibility of a true awareness of God. The criterion of the truth of a symbol naturally cannot be the comparison of it with the reality to which it refers, just because this reality is absolutely beyond human comprehension. The truth of a symbol depends on its inner necessity for the symbol-creating consciousness. Doubts concerning its truth show a change of mentality, a new attitude toward the unconditioned transcendent. The only criterion that is at all relevant is this: that the Unconditioned is clearly grasped in its unconditionedness. A symbol that does not meet this requirement and that elevates a conditioned thing to the dignity of the Unconditioned, even if it should not be false, is demonic.

The third group of objective symbols are the natural and historical objects that are drawn as holy objects into the sphere of religious objects and thus become religious symbols. In the foreground stand the historical personalities that have become the

object of a religious act. It would of course be entirely contradictory to the religious consciousness if one characterized these personalities, or what they did and what happened to them, as symbols. For the peculiarity of this kind of object of the religious consciousness depends precisely upon their historical reality, their reality in the objective sense. The use of symbolism with regard to this world in which the holy is supposed to be really present would involve a denial of its presence and hence the destruction of its existence. And yet this denial is inevitable as soon as these holy realities are looked upon as being rationally objective. For in the context of the rational world of concrete objects they have no place. And if it were possible to give them such a place, for instance, with the help of occultism, the thing aimed at in the religious act, that is, the intuition of the unconditioned transcendent, would not be grasped. These historical personalities, in so far as they are considered as symbols, therefore, have no place in the objective world. More than this, they cannot have such a place even though it be to their advantage as historical figures. This signifies, however, that these objects that possess a holy character are not empirical, even if they can only be conceived of as existing in the empirical order. This means that they are symbols, they represent the presence of the unconditioned transcendent in the empirical order. That this presence is viewed as an empirical event (for example, the resurrection), indicates the figurative character that attaches to every objectification of the transcendent. It is therefore correct to say that Christ or the Buddha, for example, in so far as the unconditioned transcendent is envisaged in them, are symbols.<sup>15</sup> But they are symbols that have at the same time an empirical, historical aspect and in whose symbolic meaning the empirical is involved. Therefore both aspects, the empirical and the transcendent, are manifest in this kind of symbols and their sym-

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<sup>15</sup>The assertion of Kurt Leese, on the occasion of a discussion of my whole position, that I have quite consistently transformed Christ into a symbol is erroneous. If it is meant by this to say that the empirical reality of Christ through a mythical interpretation is of no significance at all, my view is wrongly interpreted. The symbolic character of Christ involves also his empirical character. Only so much is correct, that this empirical aspect cannot be understood apart from symbolic intuition. It is not possible and it is also superfluous to probe into the empirical element "in itself" that stands behind the symbolically interpreted, empirical aspect of Christ. This would be to search for something that would no longer be symbolic, as liberal theology tried to do it.



bolic power depends upon this fact. The same thing holds for them as for the name of God: all of these are symbolic, and in such a way that in both cases the unsymbolic reality is expressed—in the one case, the empirical, in the other, the transcendent. It is the task of historical criticism, which runs along parallel to atheistic criticism, to prevent these groups of symbols from degenerating into false objectifications. Religion is greatly indebted to modern research on the life of Jesus, in that it has accomplished this task by recognizing the problematic character of the empirical element and by emphasizing the importance of the symbolic element. It is never possible, however, to alter or to re-create a symbol by means of historical criticism. This group of symbols can also be measured by the standard of how effectively the unconditioned transcendent is expressed in them. The rise and decline of symbols is a matter of the religious and not of the scientific mentality.

The third group of objective religious symbols involves the level of symbols that we have characterized as "pointing" symbols. It is the immensely large class of signs and actions of a special significance that contain a reference to religious objects of the first level. This whole class of symbols can be divided into actions on the one hand and objects on the other that symbolize the religious attitude. In the first category belong, for example, all cultic gestures, to the second, all illustrative symbols, such as the cross, arrows and the like. An elaboration of this class of symbols would be tantamount to working out a theory of the phenomena of religion in general. This is not at the moment feasible. Only one point significant for the principle in question may be mentioned here. All these symbols can be conceived as objective symbols of the third group reduced to a lower power. They all had originally more than "pointing" significance. They were holy objects or actions laden with magical sacramental power. To the degree in which their magical-sacramental power was reduced in favor of the unconditioned transcendent on the one side, and in the direction of the objectification of their reality on the other, they were brought down to the level of the "pointing" symbol. This process is never wholly completed. Even in radically critical religions like Judaism and Protestantism the conservatism of the religious mentality has preserved the magical-sacramental attitude towards reality. Concerning the other great forms of religion it is much better to be silent. Even in the mere "pointing" symbols, so long as they

are living, there remains a residue of their original sacral power. If this is wholly lost, it is no longer justifiable to speak of symbols; the symbol is now replaced by conventional idioms which may then be raised by means of religious art into the purely esthetic sphere. And this can happen not only to divine signs and attributes but also to the divine beings themselves, as history has demonstrated. This observation leads to the conclusion that the second level of religious symbols, the "pointing" symbols, are transitional in character. And this is based on the nature of things. So long as symbols are imbued with sacral power the religious act is oriented towards them. When the religious act is no longer oriented towards them, that is, when they lose their sacral power, they degenerate into mere signs. This transition, however, involves so large an area of the religious life that one is justified in assigning to it a special place. At all events, this one conclusion is evident, that the real religious symbol is the objective symbol, which in its three groups represents the unconditioned transcendent.

#### 4. *The rise and decline of religious symbols*

Religious symbols are created in the course of the historical process of religion. The inner impulse of this historical process has been made clear through the consideration of the myth. It is a tendency that is two-fold, towards religious transcendence and towards cultural objectification. Religious criticism manifests itself in the opposition of the divine and the demonic. As a result of this criticism religious symbols are forced inevitably into the status of the demonic. At first their reality is not destroyed, but it is weakened; the real symbolic power lives on in the sphere of the divine. The thus weakened demonic symbols can still have a long life; eventually, however, they tend to withdraw and become mere signs, or wholly to disappear.<sup>16</sup> Scientific criticism does not in itself have the power to make religious symbols disappear. Wherever it seems to have this power, a deflection in the religious con-

<sup>16</sup>The Calvinist criticism of the mass (as "accursed idolatry") forces it into the demonic and makes the eucharist a mere "pointing" symbol: the beginning of its disappearance. The question may be raised—and it has been raised by critics of this essay—whether every religious symbol is necessarily subject to the process of destruction. This question cannot be decided *in abstracto*. The possibility that a symbol, freeing itself from all its demonizations and profanizations, will come to life again through the power inherent in it, is always a real possibility *in abstracto*. Whether it becomes a reality depends upon the actual faith of the time, whose ways are not to be determined *a priori* nor on the basis of something extraneous to it.

sciousness has already taken place. Wherever scientific criticism is effective, it leads not to a demonization, but rather to a profanization of the symbols. The decisive means for bringing about the profanization of symbols is the exposing of their symbolic character. For this reason the religious consciousness always protests against the characterization of its objects as symbols. In this respect nothing is changed by proving that reality can, indeed must be embraced in the symbol. The shimmering quality that attaches to all objects to which the concept of the symbol is applied can, by the peculiarly religious sense for reality, be recognized only as a negation of its reality. Thus the question arises as to what can be or become a religious symbol in the cultural situation of our day.

On the whole the situation is such that the contents of categories arising out of the scientific and philosophic mode of creating concepts have the immediate persuasive power that fits them to become symbols. The fact that in the most highly educated circles the attitude of certainty towards scientific concepts is shattered and that the mythical character of these concepts is recognized, does not even in these circles greatly affect the self-evident symbolic power of these concepts. The idea of God illustrates the kind of change to which religious symbols have been subjected. The idea of God has by misuse through objectification lost its symbolic power in such measure that it serves largely as a concealment of the unconditioned transcendent rather than as a symbol for it. The recognition of this its unobjective, symbolic character has a chance of influence only in so far as the "ring" of the unconditioned transcendent can still be heard in the word "God." Where this is not the case, the proof that the intellectual content of the idea of God is symbolic can only hasten its loss of power.

This situation with regard to religious symbols, a situation which is fraught with great danger, may give rise to the desire to treat that which is referred to in the symbol without using symbols. Of course this cannot mean that beyond all symbols the unconditioned transcendent should be directly intuited. Rather it signifies that reality should no longer be used as material for symbols. It signifies that reality itself should be looked at immediately and be spoken of in such a way that its position in and before the unconditioned



transcendent would receive direct expression. Undoubtedly, it might well be the highest aim of theology to find the point where reality speaks simultaneously of itself and of the Unconditioned in an unsymbolic fashion, to find the point where the unsymbolic reality itself becomes a symbol, where the contrast between reality and symbol is suspended. If this were really possible, the deepest demand of the religious consciousness would be fulfilled: religion would no longer be a separate thing. This in no way signifies, however, that religion should be reduced to an artistic or scientific approach to reality. It signifies rather an immediate concern with things in so far as they confront us unconditionally, that is, in so far as they stand in the transcendent.

But against this idea, which would involve especially in our day a great unburdening of the religious consciousness, an emancipation from the burden of a symbolism that has lost its self-evident character, there arises a serious objection: the idea rests on the presupposition that an unmythical treatment of the unconditioned transcendent provides the religious possibility of fully penetrating reality. This possibility, however, presupposes that reality stands in God, that is, that reality is eschatological and not present. In our time the idea prevails that certain realities with symbolic power must be placed above other realities without symbolic power and this very fact indicates that reality as a whole is separated from what it ought to be, it is not transparent of its ultimate meaning. Only in so far as this were the case, would reality itself acquire symbolic power and thus the realm of special symbols would become unnecessary: reality and symbol would become identical.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>This section is the most important and the most questionable of the entire essay. In my essay on "Belief-ful Realism" I have attempted to accomplish the same thing, namely, a language without symbols. Perhaps it is a sign of the maturity of our religious development that its prophetic word—so far as any such is used—grasps the transcendent without symbol, just as it is a sign of the genius of great poets that they have at their command words that are both unsymbolic and precise and nevertheless penetrate into the deepest levels of our existence. Examples of this may perhaps be found in the later poems of Rilke and in some of the writings of Werfel. The word "unsymbolic" here signifies, without a transcendent, objective symbol.

The idea is that if God is all in all, there is no more need to speak of God in special symbols and even to use the word God. Speaking of things would mean speaking of the depth in which things are rooted and of the heights to which they are elevated. For me the greatest religious utterances are those in which this type of non-symbolic speaking is more or less reached. But they are rather rare and they must be rare, because our real situation is that of distance from God and not of God being all in all.

## A Critique of Professor Tillich's Theory of the Religious Symbol

WILBUR M. URBAN

I have been asked to comment briefly on the foregoing paper on "The Religious Symbol." I am glad to do so, for it brings clearly into view what seem to me to be perhaps the basal issues in this important and interesting problem. Owing to limits of space, I shall suggest questions rather than attempt argument. The views of the religious symbol which lie back of these comments can be found in my article, "Symbolism as a Theological Principle," *The Journal of Religion*, January, 1939, and in my book, *Language and Reality*, Chapter XII, "Religious Symbols and The Problem of Religious Knowledge."

Professor Tillich brings to the subject the wide range of psychological and sociological knowledge and the profound understanding of the religious consciousness which we are accustomed to connect with his work. With his account of the religious symbol and of its relation to other types of symbolism I am, with certain reservations which will appear, in agreement. So also with his account of the types of religious symbols. It is, accordingly, with his theory of religious symbols and its relation to other theories that we are chiefly concerned. Professor Tillich is right in finding the *differentia* of the religious symbol in its transcendent reference. He is wrong, I think, in holding that the thing referred to in the "mythical" or religious symbol is the unconditioned transcendent, in the sense "that it transcends being in itself as well as being for us."

It is impossible to evaluate his theory of the religious symbol until one examines his general theory of symbols. Here I find him not easy to understand and not wholly consistent. With his criticisms of the "negative" and purely naturalistic theories I am in full sympathy; they are in principle the same as those which I have made in the writings referred to. The issue really turns upon

his evaluation of the "critical idealistic" theory of which Cassirer is taken as the chief representative. I should like to examine this criticism in detail but space will not permit. I will allow myself merely two comments. The "inadequacy of this theory is shown," he holds, "by the fact that mythical symbols are from the objective, empirical point of view without a basis." Two doubtful assumptions underlie this statement: first, an identification of the religious symbol with the mythical (the careful distinction between religion and myth made by Cassirer being neglected); and secondly, the assumption, so constantly made, that empirical and objective knowledge is given only by science. It is precisely the value of Cassirer's theory that both religion and science are symbolic forms, developed for different purposes. My own feeling is that Professor Tillich's conceptions of both myth and science are unsatisfactory and it is to these points that the difficulties in his theory of the religious symbol must be traced.

Professor Tillich describes his own theory of the religious symbol as "transcendent realism," in contrast to the negative and the critical idealistic theories. He does not relate it, however, to another theory of the religious symbol—the classical Christian—which is also a form of realism. The thing referred to, on his view, is "the unconditioned transcendent, the source of both existence and meaning, which transcends being in itself as well as being for us." "All knowledge of God has a symbolic character;" "symbols provide no objective knowledge but yet a true awareness." I confess that I cannot make much out of contradictions such as this. Both the theory of critical idealism and the critical realism of the classical Christian theory can speak much more intelligibly here. My own belief is that unless there is "analogy of being" between the "Creator" and the "created," between being in itself and being for us, it is perfectly futile to talk of either religious symbolism or religious knowledge.

It seems quite clear that we have here an extreme form of the "negative theology" and a theory of symbolism which fits in with the "dialectical" theology. There are two aspects of this theory which I personally cannot accept and which, to my mind, condemn to *ultimate* unintelligibility any theory which contains them. The first of these is what I shall describe as pan-symbolism—the



view, namely, that *all* knowledge of God has a symbolic character. As I have sought to point out, the notion of symbolic knowledge (and symbolic truth) is meaningless except in contrast with non-symbolic knowledge. Now the fact that God is "named" means, of course, that in the very *naming* some symbolic element enters; but unless the name is to be wholly fictional, it must refer to some aspect of the transcendent which is known analogically. Such a theory as Professor Tillich's easily becomes a prey to purely negative and naturalistic theories—pan-symbolism becomes pan-fictionism. In the second place, unless we know in some way, either immediate or mediate, that there is a being whom men call God, religious symbolism becomes *mere* symbolism—in the bad sense. The God idea cannot itself be a symbol, as Professor Tillich implies. In the last analysis there is little difference between this and Feuerbach's position.

Professor Tillich is doubtless justified in resenting the charge of atheism brought against him in connection with his *Philosophy of Religion*. Nevertheless, when he says that it is "the function of atheism ever to remind us that the religious act has to do with the unconditioned transcendent and that the representations of the transcendent are *not objects concerning whose existence or non-existence a discussion would be possible*," we are not so sure. If our human ideas of God are of such a character that all questions of the existence or non-existence of their *referends* are meaningless, then I cannot see how questions of the truth or falsity of our symbols can have anything more than humanistic significance. If to say this is to call forth the charge that dialectical thinking (and dialectical theology) is "strange" to me, I can only reply that it is indeed strange, *passing strange*, for to me it contains a fundamental unintelligibility at its very core.

# Neo-Humanism in Europe and America

SIEGFRIED MARCK

## I

### *Traditions*

In the history of philosophy all periods in which the ideas of autonomy and emancipation prevail may be called periods of humanism. Humanism arises wherever man becomes the centre of the world. This attitude always signifies a reversal of the central role of supra-human or supra-natural forces. Protagoras, the Greek sophist, may therefore be called the first humanist because of his famous sentence: Man is the measure of all things. This principle is apparently opposed to other standpoints which affirm that God or the moral standards of society, the laws of the state or even of an objective science, are the measures of all things. When humanism of this kind is considered as religion, God seems to be created in the image of man rather than man in the image of God. We may designate Protagoras a humanist; but would it be wrong to give the same name to Socrates, the antagonist of Protagoras? He, too, performs the Promethean task of bringing philosophy down from supra-natural areas and linking it with mankind. Nevertheless he struggles against the philosophy of the sophists. He sets up the objective validity of certain human concepts and of moral values as opposed to the arbitrary and subjective attitude of the sophists. Though in a certain sense for Socrates, as for Protagoras, man is the measure of all things, his man has a different structure from the man of Protagoras. He agrees with Protagoras in the view which removes supra-human forces from the centre of the universe, but he substitutes for them supra-human values. In the opinion of Socrates and his idealistic successors, the human being needs supra-human values in himself. As a human being he has relations which transcend his purely natural character.

The motive of humanism is strong in almost all great periods of the history of mankind, and wherever it appears we encounter these two trends, the naturalistic and the idealistic. In modern times humanism arose as a reaction against medieval scholasticism. It was not a historical accident that the name "humanist" was first appropriated by the literary and intellectual men of the Renaissance. The autonomy of the different spheres of human

culture is emphasized in modern humanism. Though the earth has lost its central place in the universe, man remains the centre of this planet. He does this by virtue of his mastery over nature through science or by the profundity of his conscience; and through the latter he is able to achieve the most direct communication with God. Thus the Renaissance and the Reformation represent anew the two trends of naturalistic and transcendental humanism, though the naturalism of the Renaissance often appears in the form of pantheism. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we find an analogous situation; the period of the Enlightenment represents emancipation through a new psychology and also through the watchword that the chief concern of mankind is man. And this attitude, which possesses similarities to that of the Greek sophists in its skeptical tendencies and in its preparation for political revolution, is deepened by the philosophy of Kant, which is itself a revival of certain features of Socrates' outlook. Kant's philosophy signifies a synthesis of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The great representatives of German idealism—Kant, Goethe, Schiller and Humboldt—bring European humanism to its climax. By belief in a higher humanity, these thinkers transcend the purely empirical nature of man. They understand him as linked with supra-human values; and, since the concept of man is not only a matter of understanding but of sentiment and belief, they reach here the sphere of the essence of religion. Kant describes the period of the Enlightenment as the emergence of man from his timid minority. But he surmounts the attitude of the Enlightenment in the same way as Socrates surmounted that of the sophists. He replaces the concept of the sovereignty of man as a natural being with that of his autonomy as a rational being. Man is the measure of all things only in so far as he is able to rise to the level of supra-human values.

Starting from the Kantian basis of idealism, the philosophy of romanticism was an attempt to restore the high scholasticism of the Middle Ages. It would philosophize with God, not man, as starting point. God or the absolute reason became again the centre of the world. Thus romanticism can be called an anti-humanistic movement. But humanistic reaction was not lacking. It came from Feuerbach and Marx. From the supreme heights of the absolute, human minds come back to the flat country of experience and here humanism seems to appear in the most radical



form of realism and anti-idealism. God for this philosophy is the spiritualization of man, and this idea replaces the religious idea of the incarnation of God in the human being. The tendency of the philosophy of the young Marx is to demolish the Platonic conception of man. Idea and idealism are transformed by Marx into ideology. The absolute ideas and absolute values in which mankind believe, according to Marx, are only ideologies which depend on economic interests and give an apparent justification to these interests. Social revolution becomes the only device for the improvement of humanity's condition. All human values are judged according to their social advantage. Marx called this position a realistic humanism. Philosophy and religion must wither away in favor of this radical humanistic attitude. Though the Marxian philosophy aims to set forth a *Realidealismus* (by this meaning a synthesis of realism and idealism with realism supreme, as against Hegel's attempt to accomplish the synthesis by the supremacy of idealism in *Idealrealismus*), it actually intensifies the consciousness in men of the fetters which bind them. Only in the last stage of our historical evolution can we accomplish the leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. In its role of diagnosing all past and present history Marxism exercises its influence by means of a kind of determinism. This system corresponds in the sphere of social and political science to the pessimistic doctrine of Schopenhauer in philosophy, and to certain tendencies of psychoanalysis in the field of psychology. With respect to its deterministic element it is even akin to the anthropological systems in which human freedom is entirely abolished by the materialism of a race theory. The so-called realistic humanism of Marxism views man as a predetermined being, conditioned by social and economic forces, just as Schopenhauer views him as determined by desires, psychoanalysis by the sex-drive, the theory of race by the composition of the blood. All these tendencies at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of our epoch ultimately threaten the freedom of human personality and turn man into a product of external circumstances, into a servant of an inevitable evolution.

## II

### *Neo-Humanism as Personalism and Anti-Determinism*

Neo-humanism in Europe today is a rather weak, but also a germinant, movement. It represents a reaction against the above-

mentioned systems of determinism, a reaction against systems in which the human being seems to be oppressed by overpowering external forces. It aims to save the personality which is today endangered by the various kinds of collectivism. It views collectivism as the highest expression of determinism in the social area. The battle-front of this new European humanism is, therefore, determined by the adversaries against whom its forces have to be concentrated. It does not seek to struggle with the church or with religious dogmatism, because religious institutions or attitudes may become its allies as against an impersonal collectivism. European neo-humanism does not emphasize the role of science, because science, which on the one hand functions for the liberation of man, on the other hand can oppress man by its insistence on a rigid objectivism and rationalism. The neo-humanism with which we are concerned here is opposed to the thesis that all problems can be solved by science. It stresses the limits of science, for a science of nature and of facts cannot solve the problem of values. It is also opposed to an experimental theory of values, because such a theory can deal only with certain psychological attitudes towards values but not with the essence of value itself. As a political philosophy humanistic personalism is opposed especially to the totalitarian systems. And though these systems, like Italian Fascism and German Nazism, sometimes glorify an anti-scientific attitude and an extreme rationalism, even here pseudo-science and the attempt to determine man by his biological structure lead to his naturalistic humiliation.

The best definition of neo-humanism and personalism has been formulated by the French thinker Emmanuel Mounier: "Personalism is any doctrine which affirms the primacy of the human person over material necessities and over the whole complex of implements man needs for the development of his person."<sup>1</sup> Hence, this personalism is a kind of indeterminism; but it would be wrong to interpret indeterminism in the metaphysical sense of the word. The social conditions or institutions which determine the human personality are the forms of modern life, created by the industrial revolution. By these forms the personality became dependent upon impersonal powers like the machine, capital, the

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<sup>1</sup>*The Personalist Manifesto*, by Emmanuel Mounier, translated from the French by monks of St. John's Abbey (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), p. 1.

laws of economics which involve the alternations of prosperity and depression. In this epoch, little by little, organizations have become powerful and have forced personality into the background. This development is characteristic of later capitalism. As a reaction against it, Fascism and Bolshevism promised to vanquish the domination of impersonal and anonymous powers, created under the rule of liberal capitalism. As a matter of fact, however, the principle of impersonalism really reached its climax in the Fascist and Bolshevist societies. In both of these forms of society the collective organizations have become the single value, and personality has had to serve the power of these organizations.

Although personalism does struggle against collectivism, it does not, however, aim to restore or to maintain old-fashioned liberalism in the form of a liberal capitalism. The essence of personalism is its struggle against both collectivism and individualism. Collectivism glorifies the dominating power of organizations, while individualism glorifies the power of the individual in its egoistic form. Personalism, on the other hand, is based on the philosophical distinction between personality and the individual. Personality cannot be defined without relation to a community and to values. Thus personalism considers the person as that part of the individual that is characterized by devotion to values. Personality is a value-concept which signifies the essence of the individual. In its essence the individuality is consecrated to supra-individual tasks. "Person means integration, while individual means diffusion," says Mounier. The individual is the empirical, egoistic and impulsive outer side of that which can be considered as its essence. The individual signifies the purely natural side of man—his existence without relation to values.

Moreover, devotion to values is not possible without devotion to a community. From this point of view personalism as a political philosophy is directed not only against the totalitarian systems but also against the abstract forms of the bourgeois world, that is, against the dissolution of the community in the atomistic form of the earlier capitalism to which the artificial and compulsory form of the later capitalism corresponds. Thus humanistic personalism leads to a form of humanistic socialism which must be clearly distinguished from that which Ortega y Gasset calls the revolt of the unorganized and undisciplined masses. These masses must be distinguished from those groups that do have a set of values



or an ideology. Masses in the sense of Ortega y Gasset can be found in all classes of a society. Concerning Marxism, Berdyaev for instance recognizes that Marxism unmasked a bourgeois idealism in its decay, and the class-lie of the bourgeoisie. But it cannot substitute for it a class-truth of the proletariat, because there is no class-truth but only a truth above all classes. Neo-humanism asks for a new society in which the full responsibility of the personality and the solidarity of all classes are reconciled. They form society as a kind of general person, a personality of personalities. Personalism is directed against every form of suppression and exploitation of man; it demands a zone of independence of the private life from politics and from the net of social compulsion. The entire social order has to be established on the principle of personal responsibility, in order that the institution may create an opportunity of free choice for everyone.

Since personalism represents a kind of indeterminism directed against the natural conditions which determine the person, the problems of the relation between man and nature, between nature and values, come to the fore. These are the chief philosophical problems of neo-humanism. Those who identify humanism with naturalism, and for whom the essence of humanism signifies a liberation from certain traditions and dogmas, attack personalism as a new form of metaphysics. They oppose the thesis that man, to be really human, must live by values higher than anything deducible from nature. But such a view is based on a misunderstanding. It is wrong to suppose that these values which are in the centre of personalism represent a supra-naturalistic reality. The philosophy of Kant, for example, attempts to establish a position beyond naturalism or radical empiricism on the one hand, and beyond dogmatism or that which today is sometimes called "religionism" on the other hand. Values are independent of empirical existence or nature. But this does not mean that they signify a supra-naturalistic reality or that they are opposed to nature in the form of an old-fashioned body-mind opposition or asceticism. Dualism between values and nature is not identical with contradiction or opposition between them. The concept of transcendental or *a priori* in a philosophy of critical idealism (not at all identical with metaphysical idealism) does not involve a second reality in the ontological sense of the word. These terms (transcendental and *a priori*) applied to values, signify that what-

ever is taken to have rightful authority in conduct cannot be determined by nature or experience. Its validity and only its validity is independent of nature and experience; nevertheless values apply only to the realm of experience itself. An attitude which transcends the opposition of metaphysics and empiricism can be called a specifically humanistic attitude. Since the discussion between Protagoras and Socrates, two forms of humanism have existed. For Protagoras man as a purely natural being was the measure of all things. Socrates discovered values as measures of the human consciousness and thus he made objective attitudes measures of all things. He had the insight that human nature intends always to surpass itself. The one position affirms that before God created man, man created God. The other affirms that God created man in his own image. But this latter thesis need not include a dogmatic position, if we understand this sentence in the sense of Socrates and Kant.

Among the other representatives of European neo-humanism I should like to mention above all Thomas Mann. In his novels as well as in his many essays this writer has developed a clear philosophy. As his thought was always determined by a tendency towards dialectic he is particularly interested in oppositions like those between the social and the artistic attitude, or between the romantic nostalgia for death and the full affirmation of life. Although his novels reflect a struggle between these contrasts, his definite decision is made in favor of that which he calls the creative centre of the human personality. He is an exponent of proportion, and, like Matthew Arnold, he hates the "preponderance of single elements." Because of these principles he became an exile when in his fatherland totalitarianism came into power. In the struggle against these tendencies he seeks new standards and values (*Mass und Wert* is the title of a journal he is editing in Switzerland).

Close to the position of Thomas Mann is that of Benedetto Croce, who also declares that we need a new humanism, if we are to escape "from intellectual anarchy, from unbridled individualism, from sensualism, skepticism, pessimism." The opposition of Benedetto Croce to Italian Fascism has, however, been less decisive than that of Thomas Mann against the Third Reich.

The neo-humanism of Nicholas Berdyaev is particularly concerned with problems of the philosophy of religion and with that

trend in modern philosophy which is called "the philosophy of existence." He looks straight into the eyes of the demonic powers that are manifest wherever partial elements of human thought and social life presume to represent the whole of action and philosophy. By a deep understanding of the relation between a divine totality and the creative and balanced human personality, Berdyaev is especially qualified to criticize all kinds of totalitarianism that stand in contrast to the true idea of totality. In a period in which technology threatens human civilization he delineates in poised terms the role of the machine in our life.

One of the most important representatives of a socialistic humanism is Hendrik de Man, who in his famous book *Beyond Marxism* criticized the petrified forms of Marxism and later developed a new socialism, based on humanistic ideals.

As for myself, having found a starting point in the above-mentioned thinkers, I have tried to develop a political philosophy of neo-humanism in my book *Der Neuhumanismus als politische Philosophie* (Zurich, 1938). Against Fascism as a sophistry based on the idea of a "conservative revolution" and against Marxism which becomes anti-philosophical by the supremacy of revolutionary action in comparison with contemplation, I propose a mobilization of humanistic forces. By this I mean a movement based on new relations between conservative, liberal and socialistic motives, the order of which is entirely disturbed by the totalitarian systems.

### III

#### *American and European Humanism*

A European humanist of today encounters in America a most interesting and amazing debate between the two different trends of humanism. It is the old discussion between Protagoras and Socrates, a discussion fought out to determine the true significance of humanism. Both parties in the dispute claim to be the real humanists: Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More and their followers on one hand and Dewey and his pragmatic partisans on the other. We must, therefore, in this concluding section of our survey set forth our position concerning this American controversy about humanism.

From what has been said above, it should be evident that we agree in principle with the attitude of Babbitt and the kind of humanism he represents. This circle of thinkers is correct in



speaking of the three levels which must be borne in mind in dealing with human nature. The lowest level is the natural world regulated by necessary or natural law; the highest (religious) level is represented by a supernatural world, the home of eternal ideas. On the middle level is the human world regulated by the will and knowledge of man. A neo-Kantian humanist considers the third level as an object of belief, since the supernatural world signifies a metaphysical reality or the unity of value and reality. (This is *Wertwirklichkeit* in the sense of Schelling and Hegel.) But the "world" of values belongs to the middle level of the human world, since it signifies only the validity of certain ultimate values which are independent of natural conditions. Man belongs to the middle level because his psychic life is connected with these values and cannot even be defined without relation to these values. He can keep his position between the natural and the divine realm only if he integrates himself with reference to a universal norm,—the generalized centre of his own personality which is directed towards values. These attitudes of humanism, as Babbitt and More interpret it, are almost identical with those of the personalism essential to European humanism today. We can also agree with Norman Foerster in his description of the chief adversaries of this humanism: "In the Renaissance the great foe of humanism was medieval other-worldliness; today its great foe is this-worldliness, obsession with physical things and the instincts that bind us to the animal order." The opposition between the "law for man" and the "law for thing" is directed against that determinism which is also the adversary of modern personalism. The old idea that self-sacrifice can be a means to the life abundant, that extinction of personality can lead to the resurrection of personality, is not alien to our type of humanism. We cannot deny that an element of ascetism and the struggle against the glorification of mere comfort represent elements of genuine personalism. Babbitt is right in completing Bergson's "*élan vital*" by the concept of a "*frein vital*." Yet, it must be remembered that it is not only in the will to refrain that the human will plays a decisive role, but also in the kind of humanism associated with the name of Socrates.

Nevertheless there are certain objections which European neo-humanists would have to make against the philosophy of Babbitt and More. European humanists affirm the creative powers of man and therefore they cannot consider a philosophy like that of

Bergson as a negation of human effort or a glorification of an undisciplined *laissez faire* of the merely natural life. They would also reject Babbitt's too rigid criticism of romanticism, especially his vehement attacks on Jean Jacques Rousseau. Babbitt himself was quite conscious of the fact that the term nature is used in very different and sometimes very ambiguous ways. The naturalism of Rousseau and of romanticism as a whole is by no means identical with the naturalism of a philosophy which denies every dualism between man and nature, between science and philosophy. We must make this objection not only as a matter of historical justice but for the defence of humanitarianism, which is treated by Babbitt as a form of sentimentalism and naturalism. Particularly in the present situation, in the struggle of a political and philosophical neo-humanism against the totalitarian systems, humanitarianism represents an important element of humanism though it is not its constitutive element. Finally, the humanism of Babbitt possessed certain conservative tendencies, by which it approached the anti-romantic and anti-sentimental attitude of Charles Maurras, the protagonist of the struggle against the ideas of 1789 in France. To be sure, emphasis on the objectivity of values against a radicalism which denies the autonomy of the human personality may in a certain sense necessarily involve a conservative attitude. But this conservatism is not identical in itself with neo-humanism as personalism; it is one of its elements and it has to be reconciled with elements of liberalism and socialism in a new synthesis. Indeed, this synthesis is the quintessence of neo-humanism.

In thus objecting to the philosophy of Babbitt we are inclined to correct his ideas by certain suggestions made by his pragmatic adversaries. In the symposium *The Critique of Humanism* (New York, 1930), the editor, C. Hartley Grattan, reproaches Babbitt for his conservatism, his neglect of social reform as a means of establishing the balance between man and his environment. Obviously, it is impossible to transform the individual without a transformation of social conditions. Naturalistic objections are also raised by Mr. Grattan against the renewal of the old mind-body dualism in the philosophy of anti-naturalistic humanism. The frailty of this dualism has been emphasized by Mounier, who follows here the French thinker Péguy, not so much in the interest of the body as in the interest of the mind itself. For a weak mind

is not able to penetrate the whole sphere of what is called body or material. We agree with Babbitt, however, in the assertion that values lie above man, that *human* experience and particularly the experience of values cannot be placed on the same level as natural events. The whole concept of a psychic "event" that is on the level of nature seems to us to be inconsistent with the first principles of psychology itself. The decision for a value-humanism against a naturalistic humanism has to be made on the battlefield where the epistemological definition of psychology makes an attack upon the presuppositions of psychological behaviorism.

Let us consider in conclusion the Humanist Manifesto which first appeared in *The New Humanist* for May-June 1933. It sets forth the program of a religious humanism which is in general based on a naturalistic and pragmatic point of view. This manifesto attacks any religious metaphysics that affirms the creation of the world or looks upon man and nature as two "substances." The standpoint on the basis of which this attack is made is of no interest to a humanism which, faithful to Kant's distinction between science and belief, remains indifferent to metaphysical questions. Such a standpoint is itself metaphysical. And, if we are to discuss the supernatural character of values or the alleged necessity of dealing with them by the method of experimental science, we must distinguish between supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values and the independence of values, especially of the value concept itself, from temporal and historical conditions. The question of supernatural guarantees of values belongs to the problems of belief; but the autonomy of the value-concept is based on a philosophy of values, which must be distinguished from all sciences of fact. All the theses of the Manifesto in which religion is said to consist of those actions, purposes and experiences which are humanly significant, and in which religious humanism goes ahead in the direction of a socialized and cooperative economic order, would be quite acceptable to most of the European humanists.

In accepting Babbitt's dualism between man and nature and his distinction between the law for man and the law for thing, we do not mean to set up a rigid opposition between these two spheres. Rather we would accept and emphasize Thomas Mann's view that nature separated from mind is brutality; and mind separated from nature is emptiness. Nature and mind are each engaged in a search for the other on a way full of difficulty, and the highest form of their meeting is man.



## A Message From France

ALBERT LÉO

It seems to me difficult, if not impossible, to write down a single line that would not seem old or even false by the time it would take to cross the ocean. Such words as luck and mischance, anxiety and suffering, change their value from morning to noon. Invaders storm not only towns and villages, but ideas and words. Hopes and fears are tossed like torpedoed vessels and you never know, when awakening in the morning, what your mind will be at noon, or whether you will still have in your head anything that deserves such a name.

And yet the place I am writing from is quiet, an out-of-the-way sunny sea resort. A lovely white rose in a vase on my desk sends out freely its soft fragrance; birds are very busy building their nests. They know nothing of the great steel birds that never coo, never nestle, never build, never sing, great steel birds that can only kill.

I wonder even if I still have any right to put down words while a terrible fight is going on some miles away, not so very far away even for an American reader. I feel actually safe in my body, but I am bleeding from one of my invisible limbs, stretched out northward, and no Frenchman dares today to feel completely alive.

May I try to appreciate and express the influence of such circumstances on our religious faith? These circumstances seem to act in two opposite ways, as awful events often do. First, for the average somewhat superficial believer, his faith is decidedly shaken and upset. Where is God? What is he doing? Machine-guns or torpedoes overcome so easily his will or his supposed will. No later than yesterday I was told of a woman who exclaimed fiercely: "God does not hear, even now! What can wake him up?" As if God should be expected to interfere visibly and directly like the gods of the Iliad, who combined strategies with their favorite warriors. Some people would have God himself bring down by some thunderous weapon the airplanes of the foe that damage lands and people.

One will remember Voltaire's cynical sentence: "*On dit que Dieu est toujours pour les gros bataillons,*" which is contradicted by the words I heard lately from the lips of a general: "Whatever the war machine may be, its final effectiveness depends on the courage of the man who works it."

Nevertheless no courage, no soul, can stand against heavy shelling or rapid machine-gun fire; and many feel that God himself, should he by some miracle appear on a modern battlefield, would be swept away and shattered like any other foe.

This so-called incapacity of God upsets many a Christian's faith—the faith of those believers who look up to him as to the great President of human affairs, pushing here and pulling there. They forget that he is the Spirit of love and good-will, a secret and supreme impulse that overcomes hate and greed, but a Spirit that can in the human heart be quenched as easily as a flickering light, for it runs counter to the oldest tendencies of our nature. Mentioning love to a man of greed is like trying a dance with a hungry tiger. Our Christ's God does not hold a balance between antagonistic powers; he counteracts all aggressive powers and proposes a kindly peace of his own, a sort of spiritual luxury that men have achieved now and then, with Jesus and St. Francis, quite opposite to shelling and invading. It is the dreadful privilege of all tyrants that they should wound God himself, shell as it were his Spirit and shatter his believers.

We must give up any notion of an all-powerful God letting men play with dangerous matches because he knows he is always able to put out the fire. No, our graceful and as it were delicate God is apt to be put aside without resistance by heavy steel tanks. The poor invaded people and dying victims are then ready to regret one thing only; not having hated sooner, more fiercely and more continuously their cruel neighbor.

We must admit that true Christian faith and decided hatred cannot dwell together in a wholesome human heart; one of the two feelings must chase out the other. Trying to maintain both results in both being disguised, and words taking on strange meanings. God becomes the Supreme Bomber, Jesus the Great Avenger. Better then put that sort of faith and that kind of talk aside and become an avowed pagan. Why not? No doubt something

of the kind has taken place, here and there, on both sides of the lines, and we have fallen some thousand years backward.

In some theological circles there has been discussion as to whether Luther is responsible for the pagan quality of today's cruel German mind. Some say yes, (Paul Olagnier: *Revue de Paris*, April 11, 1940); some say no. Protestants of course (Denis de Rougement, *La Vie Protestante*, March 15, 1940) argue that Luther did not have sufficient time, in twenty years or so, to check German paganism!

It seems there has been some comfort-loving, some idle traditionalism, in modern theology, at least in the churches of Europe,—a theology not daring to face squarely the problem: What is God to us? What is he to the world at large? One can find a terrible contrast between the constant use of his name, in clerical circles, and the true meaning of this greatest of words, and therefore of ideas. God is easy to name, a hundred times in an hour if you care to, but what do you mean? What do you *not* mean? The question often remains unanswered. And so at the time of a great crisis our people are uncertain and feverish, pulled in opposite directions, groping in a darkness which they are accustomed to call light, or at least dawn.

The above statement seems contradicted by the fact that nowadays, in France at any rate, churches are more crowded than ever, prayers are more earnest, charity is more practiced. Should it not be that when all human strongholds are shaken or upset, many a believer looks up to the unchangeable? True faith does not linger over such problems or questions as we have just mentioned. Real believers just throw out their arms to their Savior and mutter: "We do not understand, we suffer bitterly, but here we are calling up to Thee. Thou knowest all, Thou wilt answer how and when Thou wilt."

Thus a child wakened by a fire rushes up to his mother, whether her room be full of smoke and flames or not, and tries to live or die in her arms. Real faith is this admirable and nearly-mad turning towards an invisible and silent Father. Some human children have a dumb or blind father, and I do not suppose they despise him on that account. And far away children love their distant father or mother just the same as, if not more than, if



they lived side by side. Faith has no hands, no eyes, no ears, no guarantee, often hardly any response, but faith goes on because it is the life of our life, the soul of our soul, the indwelling light of God, that makes the impossible become possible and changes our tears into smiles.

At times we feel inclined to pray:

*Our Father, hidden in a distant Heaven,*

*Thy name is no more hallowed.*

*Thy kingdom is destroyed.*

*Thy will is laughed at on earth more than in Heaven.*

*Give us today no daily shelling.*

*Thou canst not forgive us, as we cannot forgive those who  
have trespassed.*

*We are deep beyond temptation and not delivered from evil.*

*To whom is power and glory forever and ever.*

And then getting rid of that blasphemous prayer, we fall on our knees and repeat as did our fathers and mothers of old:

*Our Father, who art in Heaven,*

*Hallowed be thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come, . . .*

Châlet Basque,

Arcachon, Gironde, France

May 17, 1940.

## Chronicle

J. BRYAN ALLIN

Lewis Mumford, "The Corruption of Liberalism," *New Republic*, April 29, 1940. This article and a companion piece by Waldo Frank were the swan songs of two contributing editors of the *New Republic*; their resignations followed. From the comment of the editors and the letters written by readers one learns that what Mumford has to say is not only true but tragic. "The record of liberalism, during the last decade," says Mumford, "has been one of shameful evasion and inept retreat." The universal elements, the moralising elements of liberalism arose long before the eighteenth century; they have a tradition as old as the Hebrews and the Greeks. But liberals have tended to think of the eighteenth century, of Voltaire's anti-clericalism, of Rousseau's doctrine of the goodness of man as their spiritual progenitors. With these doctrines liberals have coupled laissez-faire capitalism. Out of such ideas pragmatic liberalism rose, a liberalism vastly preoccupied with the machinery of life. "Pragmatic liberalism did not believe in a world where the questions of good and evil were not incidental but of radical importance." It disengaged itself from reality and rid itself of all human emotion to such an extent that an emotional anesthesia set in, an anesthesia which permitted the liberal to retain his incurable optimism. Since space permits little more I must tear one sentence out of its context in a brilliant analysis to serve as a conclusion. "What is demanded is a recrystallization of the positive values of life, and an understanding of the basic issues of good and evil, of power and form, of force and grace, in the actual world."

Willard L. Sperry, "Liberalism," *Christendom*, Spring 1940. Dean Sperry comes to much the same conclusion from different premises. In the last twenty-five years, says the Dean, defeatism has crept into liberalism. This has been encouraged by the popular conception of liberalism which is simply the idea that man can live without the older dogmas and still claim some connection with his historic past. "The term seems to take on an intelligible content only when it is used to denote a basic confidence in human nature." There are at least four points in which it needs correction: (1) Liberalism needs a doctrine of man. (2) Until it can restate a credible doctrine of man Liberalism cannot formulate a doctrine of God. (3) The fresh interest in worship is an admission that psychology and sociology are not the sum of theology. "Liberal Protestantism needs to find and feel with fresh force the object of its worship." (4) Because Liberalism is only imperfectly scientific and habitually ignores the sciences which deal with the objective order of nature, it has cut itself off from much of the sober thinking of the modern world. One might wish that the end of the

article had been prophetic rather than didactic especially since the analysis is compelling.

George La Piana, "The Political Heritage of Pius XII," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1940. The policies of the Catholic Church are of great importance to all of us and it is fortunate that Professor La Piana of Harvard Divinity School has written a clear analysis of the present tendencies. Pius XII inherited from Pius XI three policies: "(1) Concordats or other agreements were negotiated with many European states, altering the relations between church and state inside those countries. (2) The Roman Question was settled by the creation of the independent state of Vatican City and the establishment of friendly relations with the Fascist regime. (3) All Catholic forces were enlisted for a 'crusade' against Communism, in particular as represented by Soviet Russia; and within each country support was given to whatever political forces were inclined to participate in this crusade." As a result of the second policy all Protestant propaganda has been suppressed in Italy, and Pius XI blessed the conquest of Ethiopia. In spite of disappointments Pius XI believed to the end that Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were bulwarks against Communism. Pius XII would like to see a chastened Germany and a Fascist Italy purged of "racism" and exaggerated nationalism, with the abolition of Socialist and Communist propaganda in the democracies, but failing that, "As Pius XI once expressed it, the Holy See is ready 'to bargain even with the devil, if this should mean the saving of a single soul.'"

Abram Vossen Goodman, "Roots of America—In Puritan Massachusetts," *Menorah Journal*, Winter 1940. Rabbi Goodman has many interesting things to say about the few Jews who lived in Puritan Massachusetts. One man, Judah Monis, is of particular interest to Unitarians because he was converted to Congregationalism, became an instructor in Hebrew at Harvard in 1722, and left the bulk of his estate as a permanent fund for the relief of clergymen's widows. "The trust is today being administered by the American Unitarian Association."

## Communications

### SCIENCE AND GOD

To the Editor of THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION:

I have just read Professor Otto's "Can Science Accept God?" in the spring issue of THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION. His question does not excite me greatly, but his arguments irritate me to the point of offering a brief reply.

His chief argument is: If God exists the events of the universe are unpredictable, if science exists those events must be predictable, therefore science must not admit that God actually exists. In Dr. Otto's definition of science, however, he does not mention prediction. And in his definition of God he does not mention unpredictability. Of what use is the show



of precise definition, if the argument which follows attaches other meanings to the words defined?

In reply one might point to the several expressions of theistic religion which have tended to deny unpredictability, but let us rather confine ourselves to the content of the essay before us. The argument reduces to this: the scientific method is useless unless events are predictable, therefore science must deny unpredictability. There is a limited sense in which this is true. If I wish to discover a method for predicting college aptitudes of students, or the occurrence of earthquakes, or the status of the nation's business, I must assume that such prediction is possible. But this is only an assumption. To transform it into a philosophical dogma, as Dr. Otto does, is to fail to meet the test of scientific method. His own aesthetic predilections for a universe of changeless law have not been eliminated. "I want a predictable world," he seems to be saying, "and I will deny anything and everything that stands in the way of that wish."

His second argument is that eminent scientists, although they inconsistently declare both for and against religion, reveal their real convictions only when they deny religion. Whether true or false, what then? Dr. Otto raised a question about God. Does he identify God and religion? Certainly there is no self-evident connection between them. The quoted proscriptions against religion would apply to humanist religion quite as well as to theistic; they would apply even to "the idealizing propensity" which the essay approves. But religion is notoriously capable of multiple definition. Unless we know in what sense the word is being used—theological, psychological, sociological—the quotations tell us nothing.

Can it be that Dr. Otto has offered us one of those "cryptic messages which scientists and religionists . . . now and again toss over their shoulders?"  
San Jose State College, San Jose, California.

ELMO A. ROBINSON.

#### PROFESSOR OTTO'S REPLY

To the Editor of THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION:

Since Professor Robinson took the trouble to point out what irritated him in my argument that reliance upon a theistic religion is incompatible with the employment of scientific method, I feel impelled to discuss his criticism somewhat in detail. But I am afraid that this would serve no good purpose. I seem somehow to have failed pretty completely to make myself clear to Professor Robinson. I cannot believe that he is justified in accusing me of making a philosophic dogma of scientific procedure. What I did was to accept that procedure as a postulate, which is something quite different. I was not discussing the existence of God, nor the adequacy of science as a complete attitude toward life. My chief concern was the refusal of certain scientists and certain religionists to deal with the problem of bringing the most objective intellectual method into harmony with the highest ideals of personal and social life.

The University of Wisconsin.

M. C. OTTO.

## Book Reviews

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION

If we substitute for the first word of Professor Mellone's ambitious title the less pretentious word "some," we shall not approach with too high expectations the reading of this book.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to most scholars of the psychology of religion, the author (a British Unitarian scholar) is quite aware that one of the most abundant wells of religious phenomenology is the vast field of the history of religion, and thus we are pleased to find him correctly starting with the insight "that an adequate appreciation of at least the outstanding landmarks in the history of religion is a necessary preparation for the study of religion in the light of the psychological factors at work in it." Yet he himself has not here given impressive evidence of such a preparation. What Mellone presents in the historical section of the book (pp. 18 to 109), is apparently not based upon a study of the sources relating to the various religions but on collections gathered from a few special works. This pick-up method, more misguiding than illuminating, does not lead us to discern the peculiar religious, devotional, emotional, rational, secular and eschatological angles from which the adherents of the respective religions envisage their life-problems.

Hence, it appears that the author is quite satisfied with the old and rather partial conception which derives religion from "social practice and socialized behavior," a behavior which is interpreted as the result of an "experience of frustration." Here the author adopts too readily J. G. Frazer's view and then to our surprise he goes on to assert that primitive religion is a body of customs and a group-possession. Does not Mellone overlook the fact that so far as we find religion among primitive peoples—and where do we not find it there?—it manifests at least some tendency of the individual to encounter the extrasensory, that not only the youth among the Red Indians used to retreat into solitude for weeks at a time in order individually to await the manifestation of the suprasensory power, but also (to make a long spatial jump) the Australian aborigines, since they believe in the existence of individual souls, have their individual *churingas*? Moreover, we should like to have found in the collectanea carefully brought together here a consideration of the metabiontic structure of the religious psyche, the affirmative behavior basic in human nature with reference to the divine besides the merely negative behavior in religion caused by frustration. In the chapter on the unconscious we miss also a discussion of the peculiar and most important doctrine of C. G. Jung. A

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<sup>1</sup>THE BEARINGS OF PSYCHOLOGY ON RELIGION. By Sidney Herbert Mellone. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939. 255 pages. 12s 6d.



treatment of these two factors—the affirmative element and the unconscious as Jung interprets it—would give us the correct understanding of the religious mind, a mind which is characterized by a simple and natural “openness” to the energies of the extrasensory world-dimension and by an outreaching receptivity for these energies.

The Meadville Theological School

KARL BETH.

### THE GENTEEL TRADITION IN THEOLOGY

It must be very hard to write an adequate book on the history of thought. The danger is that the writer may divide his interest between so many subjects that he deals adequately with none, or, on the other hand, he may consider only one stream of thought and thus miss the richness which the changing scene really presents. The late Dr. Foster, in lectures given in 1934, at the Andover-Newton Theological School, sought to sketch the history of American Protestant thought from the Civil War to the World War.<sup>1</sup> He did cover a part of this, but he covered only that part which is already fairly well known in conventional Protestant liberal circles. The authors with whom he deals most adequately are Henry Ward Beecher, George A. Gordon, William N. Clarke and Henry C. King.

The result is that the book seems to be a history of Congregational thought, and that of a special variety, and has very little to do with Protestantism in general. The book does not include any discussion of mysticism or of the work of Professor Rufus M. Jones, though some of the best of this was done before the World War. There is no serious attempt to do justice to the conservative Protestant theology of the period or to the more evangelical tendencies. Indeed, a newcomer might read the book and come away from it with the conclusion both that America was merely an elongated shadow of New England and that Protestantism was synonymous with the genteel tradition. The book gives no suggestion of the tremendous effect produced by the Gifford Lectures of Professor William James.

Though Professor Foster's book is thus not at all a catholic work, it is nevertheless of service in the field in which Professor Foster was competent. The revised and mitigated form of the New England theology is something worth understanding, and this book is one of the best attempts at its clarification. But the chief service of this volume is the insight it gives into Professor Foster's generation. In our time we have heard so much of Barthianism, Neo-Thomism and “urbane orthodoxy” that we have almost forgotten how men felt before these tendencies became important. The most revealing feature of Professor Foster's treatment of his theme is his unargued assumption that revised Puritanism was the main stream. Leland Stanford University.

D. ELTON TRUEBLOOD.

<sup>1</sup>THE MODERN MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN THEOLOGY. By Frank Hugh Foster. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939. 219 pp. \$1.75.